

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting

JULY 8, 2013

7:00 p.m.

Lincoln Center

PRESENT: Atwater, Crockett, Cruz, Hagenow, Leon, Pattacini,
Scappaticci, Walton

ALSO PRESENT: Interim Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kisiel, Assistant to the
Superintendent for Finance & Management Brooks,
Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services
Matfess

ABSENT: Luxenberg

A. OPENING

A.1&2. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Chairperson Pattacini. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Mr. Pattacini.

A.3 ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

**ADOPTED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of
Education of June 24, 2013.**

**Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the
motion.**

7/0/1 – Voted in favor (Ms. Walton abstained).

B. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT – PART I

B.1. High School Chrome Notebook Proposal

Dr. Kisiel reviewed that the proposal being presented this evening by Mr. Geary was discussed at the Curriculum & Instruction meeting on June 27th.

Matt Geary, Principal at MHS, spoke about why he felt it was important for all students at MHS to receive Chromebooks. He spoke about revolutionizing

teaching and learning; enabling students to have access to the internet; do authentic research; and having access to Googledocs.

Regarding why Chromebooks were chosen over other units, such as IPADS, some reasons were that Chromebooks are easier to manage in larger numbers and require less maintenance and less manpower to keep them running, as well as not having the Apps that kids like to play with for games on other devices. IPADS are difficult to manage in large numbers and are better for individual use. Traditional laptops require a lot of man hours from IT, as well as being costlier. With a Chromebook, all work is in a cloud, with essentially nothing on the book itself. The goal is for everyone to use these regularly both in school and at home. Mr. Geary stressed that the work done in researching this topic was largely done by his two library media specialists, Kerri Kearney and Pam Fontaine, who were present to answer questions, along with Dr. Pease.

The cost of the Chromebooks is \$240 each, plus a \$30 management fee to push items onto the consoles.

Mr. Geary wants students to be able to research on their own, and participate in interactive learning every day, not just on occasion when working in a computer lab. Providing these for the student body promotes equity as they all will have the same device. Options for reduced internet rates for home use will be provided.

The device is easy to use, and Mr. Geary pointed out that at the test meeting it took a teacher about four minutes to get the book out of the box and started. There is very little maintenance required for these devices. Mr. Geary notes these will not completely replace computer labs. He also notes the lifespan of a Chromebook is about four years, and it will be budgeted in the technology budget to replace them every four years.

The students will receive their books on the first day of school. There is insurance available for purchase at a cost of \$30 per book and \$10 for the charger. If the first book is replaced, a second round of insurance rises to \$60, with \$20 for the charger.

Mr. Geary noted that bringing in the Chromebooks requires some changes to the Acceptable Use policy, which were discussed.

Mr. Scappaticci was impressed with the user manual that was presented. It was noted the library media specialists created the manual. He wondered if textbooks would be downloaded to the devices. Mr. Geary is looking into that, but currently he does not feel that is possible, though some on-line help

for certain texts may be available. Eventually Mr. Geary feels these will lead to the purchase of fewer textbooks. It was noted novels can be downloaded.

Mr. Scappaticci thought these would revolutionize teaching and wondered about training for teachers. Mr. Geary noted the PD for teachers is funded through the Nellie Mae grant and he will come back at a later meeting with students and teachers to get their feedback about what they are doing differently with this technology.

Ms. Walton wondered what the plan was after four years when the books were due to be replaced. Mr. Geary stated ideally it would be for students to be able to purchase their book at a nominal fee, but that is being worked out.

Ms. Walton wondered if other local districts had rolled out this type of technology for their students. Mr. Geary stated Plainville is rolling this out this year as we are. No other local districts are using Chromebooks, though Wisconsin has used them. He noted the last version of the Chromebook was not as good and he feels they will be more popular now. IPADS are very difficult to manage.

Dr. Pease noted that the policy that will be addressed later in the agenda. He discussed that the last time the policy was revised was in 2002. At that point the internet was fairly new and we didn't have smart phones. People viewed the internet as a dangerous place.

Dr. Pease outlined the changes:

- Previously parents could opt their child out of internet use. That is no longer possible as we cannot educate their student without use of the internet.
- Internet cannot be taken away for misbehavior.
- Parents will sign off on all policies at once in the handbook on-line.
- There is no expectation of privacy on the Board network.
- Photos are not allowed on phones or the Chromebook, unless as part of an assignment.
- The District reserves the right to inspect the technology.
- Use of a cellular network to bypass restrictions is not allowed.
- Students must comply with policies.

Ms. Cruz wondered about access, and if certain sites are restricted. Dr. Pease reviewed that all internet through the school is filtered through Smoothwall which is CIPA compliant (Children's Internet Protection Act). The state also adds a filter, so there are two layers of protection. Mr. Geary added that in managing the consoles, sites can be blocked.

Mr. Crockett wondered if an attorney had looked at the policy and handbook. Dr. Pease stated they had not presented this to an attorney, but it is standard and there is nothing unusual in the policy or manual and both CABE and other districts use similar items.

Mr. Pattacini pointed out that essentially, Item G.2.b. was covered by this presentation. Dr. Kisiel noted this is the first reading of the policy and action will be requested at the next meeting.

Mr. Leon wondered if action would be required tonight to allow for time to order the books so they are ready for the start of school. Dr. Kisiel stated that would not be necessary and he is not concerned about any legalities and action on the 26th of August will be sufficient.

Mr. Leon expressed his thanks to Mr. Geary and his staff for making Manchester a leader in this arena.

Mr. Geary pointed out again that much of the work preparing for this initiative was done by the Library Media Specialists, Kerri and Pam. Also, Dr. Pease had spent previous technology money to upgrade the network, which was a necessity for these devices. A Chromebook was passed around to Board members. Dr. Kisiel stated that if any Board members preferred a Chromebook to their IPADS, they may be easier to use and he would be happy to switch the devices out for any members that preferred that.

B.2. Middle School Administrative Reorganization Plan

Dr. Kisiel reviewed that some Alliance Grant funds will be used to increase student support services at Illing. Dr. Kisiel expressed that he has been pleased with Mr. Welch's efforts at Illing and that the additional personnel will be covered by the current budget and through the Alliance Grant.

Mr. David Welch, Principal of Illing, presented a Power Point, which is available on the website. Mr. Welch had discussed the changing climate and need for support with the staff, Dr. Kisiel, and Heidi Macchi. Two new positions will be the Director of Student Support along with a Student Support Coordinator. These positions are not typical and will morph over time, as may the titles. This is not a time for a triad of student/parent/teacher, but the student in the center with many arms reaching in representing community, parent, and teacher. Mr. Welch feels we need to stop being reactive and build trust and relationships with students. The at-risk team, Yale, is a 7/8 mix team. Mr. Welch reviewed when he was a principal in East Hartford he had success with reducing referrals and increasing help for the students, eventually helping that school achieve Outstanding Middle School Of The Year.

Mr. Welch outlined that the Director of Student Support will look for tier 2 and 3 supports. At Illing they developed a processing room which is a type of mediation room for kids in conflict, sort of a processing room before an office referral is made. The outreach intervention aspect of the new positions will implement creative not reactive solutions.

The student support person will have a special ed and guidance background and work closely with the Director.

Mr. Welch noted parents are asking for help and we need to think beyond what we've been doing.

Job descriptions for both positions were included.

Mr. Welch reviewed there are chronic absenteeism problems at Illing. There were approximately 31% of the students with 4 or more unexcused absences this year. The office referrals for Grade 8 this year were 928, while Grade 7 students accumulated 737 office referrals. Mr. Welch feels the kids are crying out for help and actually want to stay in school. He would like to see alternatives to suspensions that make connections between home and staff. His desired outcomes are reduced numbers of referrals; reduced suspensions; and increased parent involvement.

Mr. Atwater wondered about the community service aspect, asking if this was an alternative punishment to suspension. Mr. Welch reviewed that these community projects are not punishments, but a way to unify the students and community. When he was principal at Bennet he hooked up with local businesses so that the students, instead of being annoying to local shopkeepers, helped them by planting flowers and taking on other community projects. Mr. Atwater was relieved that this community service was not a punishment.

Mr. Leon stated he heard the passion and frustration in Mr. Welch's presentation. He wondered if the two new positions have already been posted. Mr. Welch stated they had and he was already interviewing many qualified candidates, including those with doctorates and current and former principals. The feedback he has received shows these positions present a refreshing change in administration and he has two full days of interviews already booked.

Ms. Cruz is concerned with the attendance problems. She notes that after four unexcused absences a letter is sent home and there are 103 follow-up letters sent subsequently. She wondered what the next steps are. Mr. Welch reviewed that there are steps that are taken for absences but stated that there is not much more we can do as DCF is maxed out and the time when

we could refer to them solely for attendance issues is past. Ms. Cruz wondered if both parents are made aware of attendance issues, as sometimes the fathers are left out of the equation. Mr. Welch stated that all angles are being looked at to help the situation.

Ms. Cruz asked about mentoring. Mr. Welch stated that currently there is community mentoring occurring in Manchester and he has piloted an internal mentor program with 15 adults in the building, which will grow next year.

Ms. Cruz expressed concern over the high number of office referrals and asked about re-offenders. Mr. Welch stated it is not unusual to have repeat offenders. Ms. Cruz pointed out the need for social work assistance.

Dr. Kisiel stated it is helpful to point out that this reorganization is not just adding the two new positions, but more reorganization with other staff and a commitment to expand wraparound services. Mr. Welch noted the YSB coordinator received services a couple of days a week to assist with small groups to counsel students about death, divorce, drugs, etc. This is being extended with a core group of daily, full-time help to provide counseling in small groups. The current assistant principals are working hard, but are reacting 85-90% of the time and they need to be able to dream, create, and prevent.

Ms. Walton noted the last time Mr. Welch presented to the Board it was a good presentation on where Illing and this is a good look into the future. Ms. Walton picked up on the fact that some students do not want to leave school, as it presents a safe place for them. She wondered if there are after school programs for these students. Mr. Welch noted there are many clubs and sports that these students participate in, but some of the students would stay even later if they could.

Ms. Walton wondered what types of behaviors are being reported in referrals. Mr. Welch noted that most revolve around insubordination and disrespect which escalates into defiance. Sometimes the child's behavior snowballs over minor incidents.

Ms. Walton asked who helps the students and families address their basic needs. Mr. Welch stated the guidance counselors are available for that.

Mr. Pattacini thanked Mr. Welch for taking the help of Illing and turning the culture around in that building. He is excited about the changes and the systemic approach to solving problems of a small set of students and he is encouraged to see his multi-faceted approach.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

Dr. Kisiel presented four items on the Consent Calendar for Board approval.

C.1. Personnel Action

Details had already been provided to the Board members with their agenda.

C.2. Increase in appropriation for FY 12-13 of \$5,643 for Adult Education Grant for a total appropriation in the amount of \$423,047

C.3. Establish an appropriation for the preliminary grant award amount of \$1,688,872 for the period 7/1/2013 – 6/30/2015 under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) 611, to be funded by the U.S. Department of Education

C.4. Establish an appropriation for the preliminary grant award amount of \$67,698 for the period 7/1/2013 – 6/30/2015 under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) 619, to be funded by the U.S. Department of Education

The Chairman called for a motion.

Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the recommendation to adopt Item C, the Consent Calendar.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

D. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, recommended several books, including *Founding Myths* and *Not Your Founding Fathers*. He notes this is the 163rd anniversary of the Fugitive Slave Act and he recommended the book *Solomon Northrup – Twelve Years a Slave*. Mr. Stringfellow recommended an article in the East Hartford *Reminder* about Rochambeau's March. He recommended a 150 year anniversary magazine on the Gettysburg Address. In the *VFW* magazine he recommended an article on the Korean War. Mr. Stringfellow also felt Mr. Welch's presentation was a good one.

E. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART II

None.

F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

G. NEW BUSINESS

G.1. Alliance Grant Proposal

Dr. Kisiel stated that last Wednesday he submitted the grant proposal to the State Department of Education. We were given only 5 ½ weeks to put the proposal together for the \$2.9 million grant. Dr. Kisiel presented a quick overview of the proposal and is looking for endorsement of the proposal tonight. The full presentation can be found on the website.

There were three priorities:

- Early instructional intervention
- Talent development
- Collaboration with the community

A 4th priority was added:

- To increase the level of college and career readiness, particularly with underachieving subgroups

Ms. Walton noted that a priority three strategy, “play by the rules” has the same name as a curriculum the state uses, which includes teaching students about civic engagement and understanding the laws and how they apply to themselves. Ms. Matfess stated this is the same curriculum being used.

Dr. Kisiel stated these are exciting times and we are fortunate to have the grant money to fund these changes.

Mr. Pattacini agreed this is an exciting time and we are applying the funds in an effective manner.

Mr. Leon moved for the Board of Education to endorse the Alliance Grant Proposal as outlined by the Superintendent of Schools. Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.

8/0 – Voted in favor.

G.2. Policy Revisions

a. Policy #3110 – Budget

Dr. Kisiel was asked by the Chair to be sure the budget policy was updated and accurate. The changes to this policy reflect procedures required by the Board. Mrs. Brooks reviewed that she followed the new town charter in changing the dates included in this policy.

b. Policy #6141.3 – Acceptable Use of Technology

The changes to this policy were covered earlier in the evening by Dr. Pease.

Dr. Kisiel reviewed that this is a first look at these policy updates and they will be brought back at the August 26th meeting for action.

Mr. Leon wondered if the budget policy reflects the new laws regarding communication on the maintenance side of the budget. Mrs. Brooks noted we were already in compliance with that law so no changes were necessary.

H. COMMUNICATIONS

H.1. Status of School Facilities Planning

Dr. Kisiel stated the Board understands the SMARTR Committee is investigating the feasibility of having two 530-student elementary schools and the impact this would have on redistricting the town. The demographer is working on a preliminary report on the issue, which will not be ready until September.

At this stage we have met with the architects doing the study on Washington and Robertson. We have reviewed the educational specifications and modified them to accommodate K-4 schools. On Wednesday, SMARTR is meeting with a member of Waterford Public Schools, where they collapsed five elementary schools down to three.

Regarding the roofing projects in town, they have not yet begun as the governor has failed to sign the bill on 1/4" pitch that was passed by the legislature. It is on his desk and should be signed soon, but the delay is making the schedule tight and construction may still be ongoing as school begins.

Ms. Walton talked about the SMARTR Committee's plan to consider expanding school size. There has been talk with the historical society. If this is something the Board and town are considering, she feels there may need to hold public forums on the issue as there are many misconceptions regarding class size and neighborhood schools.

Mr. Leon stated that with the demographer's report not being ready until September he assumes that means no school renovations will be on the referendum in the Fall. Dr. Kisiel stated he had spoken with Town Manager Scott Shanley and the Board of Directors wants the Bennet/Cheney project on the referendum in the Fall. Action on that will be needed in late August/early September. He cautioned the Board that the consultant has made it clear that the report that will be ready in September is a preliminary report with no definitive findings.

Mr. Leon is not comfortable with Cheney/Bennet going forward without the community understanding the full plan. He agrees with Ms. Walton that there needs to be community feedback. He is uncomfortable putting anything on the ballot without the information being disclosed.

H.2.

Dr. Kisiel asked the Board members to review their calendars, specifically the last two weeks of July through mid-August, to come up with dates they are available to meet with the Board of Directors in a joint meeting regarding security issues. This will be an evening meeting.

I. COMMITTEE REPORTS

I.1. Policy and Curriculum & Instruction Committee Minutes

Ms. Hagenow reviewed the last meeting held on June 27th, which was a joint meeting between the two committees and they discussed the Chromebook recommendation and the policy changes. In attendance were Mr. Atwater and Ms. Hagenow, along with Dr. Kisiel, Mr. Geary, Dr. Pease, Ms. Fontaine, and Ms. Kearney.

J. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Limited to items on tonight's agenda)

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, gave his support to the Consent Calendar, especially the fourth item regarding special education. Mr. Stringfellow feels Mr. Geary and Dr. Pease are on the right path and he previously passed along information to them that he felt would be helpful. Regarding security, on CTW last week there were forums on security and there is a meeting the third week of July. In *Livewire* magazine, which is a community college newspaper, Mr. Stringfellow recommended several good articles. In *Education Digest* Mr. Stringfellow recommended articles on classroom management, principals, and teaching mentoring. Mr. Stringfellow expressed that he would like feedback on the information he suggests, wondering if it is helpful and appreciated. He points out he cares, as a former student.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

None.

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Pattacini called for a motion to adjourn.

Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 8:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Neal Leon
Board Secretary